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# On Aaron's Neck

AND

AMOS STRONG  
LEGISLATOR

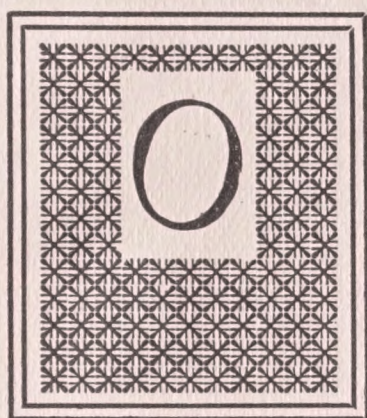


By WILLIAM C. SMITH









# N AARON'S NECK

AND

AMOS STRONG,  
Legislator;

TWO SHORT STORIES

BY

WILLIAM C. SMITH

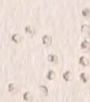


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M. C. W. Jr. 1910.

ON AARON'S NECK







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## ON AARON'S NECK

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### I

**I**T was a cool June morning, but Prudence had been vigorously at work cleaning the woodshed and sink-room (it was the last of the spring cleaning), and as she stood before the screen door resting and looking out upon the green fields, she fanned herself almost involuntarily with the end of her apron. Presently she noticed the tall, bent form of Uncle Obed laboring up the street, and a peculiar smile, intelligible only to those who had some knowledge of that gentleman, overspread her face. Uncle Obed was one of the "characters" of the seaside village of Columbus. Pompous, dignified, business-like in manner, he travelled from house to house day after day with his dilapidated satchel scantily supplied with goods, selling now and then a few pins, needles, handkerchiefs and the like with as much dignified condescension as if he had been proprietor of the whole town. His cheerfulness alone saved him from ridicule. It abounded whether he sold you anything or not, whether his faithful wife had been pouring the vials of her wrath upon him or whether the flow of domestic happiness was untainted and untroubled. Approaching the door slowly, he paused to relieve



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himself of the satchel slung over his shoulder and clearing his throat, inquired for Mrs. Jackson.

Prudence opened the door slowly, allowing him time to clean his boots on the mat outside, advised him to try the mat inside on the plea that the other was not very clean, and snatching a newspaper from the chair, motioned for him to be seated. Glancing across the room, he noticed the wasted form of Mrs. Jackson rising above the white expanse of newspaper that covered the kitchen stove. In that house no dust was allowed to settle on anything but newspapers and the floor. Even the clock was ornamented with newspaper head-gear.

"Well, Mrs. Jackson," the old man began, "you're smart here. All the cooking done and the stove kivered over before nine o'clock."

"Law, Mr. Crump, it's all Prudence' doin's," replied Mrs. Jackson. "I've had rheumatiz so bad lately I hain't good fer much."

"We must expect that at our age," said Uncle Obed. "I'm growing stiff myself, but I keep at it. Business must be attended to. I'm on my way now down to Mr. Power's store to replenish my stock, then I must take my regular route to the nor'west quarter of the town, go over to cousin Jane's with a pair of stockings for the child and over to widder Whistler's with some hairpins and tea she's ordered. I shall be scursely able to walk



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when it comes night. Is there anything in my line this morning?"

Prudence, who had been watching the satchel with mingled feelings of curiosity and amusement, was surprised to find, when he opened it, that there really was something in it—a bandanna handkerchief, a cake of chocolate, three sticks of candy, pins, spools of cotton, two small blank-books and a package that smelled like coffee. Mrs. Jackson thought she would like "a little good old Shooshong tea" once more and he promised to bring some the next day.

"So you will have some new neighbors this summer I hear," said he, as he arose to go.

"Dew tell," rejoined the old lady, "I hain't heerd about it. Who's comin'?"

"Widder Winter over here has let her house fer the summer to a family from York—New York. Four boys and a gal and a servant, coming in a few days."

"Well, the widder is mighty sly about it," gasped the old lady, rising energetically from her chair without a trace of rheumatism in her movements. "I hain't heerd a syllable of this afore. 'Peers tew me folks dew about as they've a mind tew nowadays."

Uncle Obed was out of doors by this time. "I s'pose it will cause talk," said he, as he started down



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the lane, and the rapid and earnest tones of the two ladies, audible even after he had reached the highway, convinced him that he was substantially correct in his statement.

The following morning when he arrived with the tea, he was cordially entreated to come in and rest a few minutes.

"I don't see how Polly Winter can let that house and things tew such a tribe as that," began the old lady. "Why, there won't be nothin' left of it. How did she git them? When air they comin'? How long air they goin' to stay? Be they sick or short of money, or in any trouble? How does she know she'll git her pay?"

Uncle Obed pleaded ignorance upon all these burning questions of the hour.

"I don't see what folks want to leave the city for," suggested Prudence. "Sister Malviny says she never wants to see the country again. She has two rooms on the corner of the street at East Discord and she can see all the passin', the street cars and everything and she does so enjoy the stir. She wouldn't leave for anything. She has a cabinet bed that shuts up in the day time, a bed lounge and a hammock bed, and the family all sleep together in one room as nice as a pin; and the cars go nearly all night. I'm just dying to go up and visit her."



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"There's curus folks in the world," said Uncle Obed, "These Yorkers hain't of our breed and style or they'd stay at home and keep to work as we do."

"That's what I say," remarked the old lady. "I don't believe they air much account and I doubt if Polly gits her rent."

And so the strangers were condemned in advance to suspicion and doubt, because at that time summer visitors and summer residents were almost unknown, at least in the little secluded community of Columbus, and the bucolic mind had not yet been adjusted to the summer vacation idea.

When the big stage coach stopped one afternoon late in June before widow Winter's cottage, the boys from "York" climbed down over numerous trunks and band-boxes to find themselves in the midst of a curious throng of all ages. For a moment, as their parents emerged from the interior of the coach, they stood in astonishment, then with one accord they exclaimed with boyish brutality: "What are you folks doing? Catching flies?"

Every one in the crowd closed his mouth but made no other movement of face or body.

"How are you?" said the youngest boy to one of about the same size near him. No response.

"Can't you say anything?" No reply.

The head of the family, who bore the name of Jamison, now led the way to the house. A few of



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the older persons remained to help the driver with the trunks, but the rest of the silent assemblage soon melted away, each carrying directly home his impressions of the new arrivals.

Widow Winter, who greeted the party at the front door, had just finished a three weeks' course of thorough cleaning, in the course of which she was twice prostrated with neuralgia and other nervous disorders and even now presented a swollen face and trembling hands to her new friends. The demon of dirt had been vanquished, but the victor was in no condition to follow up her advantage. Indeed, had the Jamisons delayed their coming a week longer, according to their original intention, it is likely that they would have found their landlady occupying the best bed and devoting her wasted energies to the consumption of irreconcilable pills and powders.

The Jamisons praised the neatness and orderliness of the house without stint, but cold chills would persist in running down their spinal columns, although the day was hot.

"I wish you *would* look into that closet and see if there are any skeletons there," said Mrs. Jamison to her husband, when Mrs. Winter had left the room. "Besides, there may be ghosts in this house. I don't think I shall stay."

"You'll feel better," said Mr. Jamison, "after the



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old lady goes and we get the blinds open and these newspapers off the chairs and pictures."

However, he thought it best to comply with the request of his wife and really felt as much relieved as she to find the closet empty.

"It's all right," said he with renewed assurance, "and so clean. Cleanliness, you know, is next to Godliness."

"I should put homelikeness in between the two," replied his wife.

Presently Mrs. Winter came in and began to remove the newspapers, remarking that she had placed them there to save dusting when the room was closed.

"May we open some of the blinds?" ventured Mrs. Jamison.

"Dew anything you wish just as if you was on your own piazza," was the reassuring response.

The children jumped to their feet at once and soon had every blind open and the newspapers out of sight.

Tom, Dick, Harry, Brother and Sister were the names by which these lively scions of the Jamison family were respectively known. The youngest boy and the girl had other names but they had fallen into "innocuous desuetude." Tom, the eldest, was nearly sixteen, and whenever his father was absent, assumed to lead and rule the family.



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After Mrs. Winter departed on the following day to live with her sister, the family fell to discussing the propriety of naming their new abode. Dick thought Seaside Villa would be an appropriate name; Tom considered it stale and flat and suggested Newspaper Jungle, but Mr. Jamison stopped proceedings by asserting that he wanted no names.

"Why not?" inquired his wife.

"Well, I see the danger of it," said he. "That bluff out there across the street is an object lesson to me. It is called Mary's Head and probably will always retain that name. Now the land all around here bears the general name of Aaron's Neck and we have the peculiar geographical romance that Mary's Head is always found on Aaron's Neck. There are hidden dangers lurking, I am convinced, even in the most judicious attempts to devise names for places."

Several days after their arrival the boys of the neighborhood first made their appearance in the yard. Harry ran out to greet them. They were leaning against the fence and grinned as he approached.

"Hello," said he.

Each one rubbed his bare feet together and grinned more.

"Where do you live?" continued Harry.

Each one rubbed his leg up and down with his foot and looked down into the sand.



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Harry whirled around on his heel and asked if they thought it was going to rain.

"Let's play hide and hoot," said one, who stood behind the others and could not be seen.

"What's hide and hoot?" exclaimed Harry.

"You hide your eyes and count a hundred and then try to—"

"Oh! it's hide and seek you mean, is it?" said Harry.

"We don't call it no such name as that," was the reply.

"Be you a city fellar?" was the next inquiry.

"Sure," said Harry.

"I thought so," said his interrogator.

"How do you tell?" inquired Harry.

"Oh, by the cut of your jib," was the response.

"Do they have stores full of candy and apples and peanuts where you live?" inquired another.

"Of course," said Harry.

"You must have got adrift then, or dragged your anchor to come to this place. A fellar can't get nothin' good down here."

The ice was now broken, they all hurried to the stable and the fun began.

When Thomas Jefferson Blossom came over from East Walkover the following Sunday evening to see Prudence, she had an unusually large budget of news for him. East Walkover was about fifteen



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miles distant from Columbus and Thomas had regularly covered that distance with his horse and buggy, going and returning, every week for the past ten years. It was a place of woods, huckleberries and occasional farm houses. His assiduous attentions to Prudence had been the subject of much comment in the past, but public opinion had now become confirmed in the idea that they would never marry. Some said Prudence would never leave her mother and go to live among the huckleberries. Others said that Thomas hated fishing and would never leave his farm, for one could do nothing in Columbus except fish or enter politics. To be sure, as things went there, no greater qualities seemed to be needed for one occupation than for the other, but Thomas would never have dreamed that he could be a politician. He was too level-headed to think of forcing himself into a position for which he was not fitted.

On the Sunday evening in question, Prudence entertained him at length regarding the unusual performances of the Jamisons.

"They have nigh about upset the neighborhood," said she. "Every blind in that house is wide open, and they use the whole place from stable to front door. In the evening the whole family use the best room and the best furniture, and they say the boys have arranged it so they can slide down the



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front stairs, through the hall and over the front steps onto the grass. And do you know, the widow don't seem a bit troubled about it. She tells folks as how she is glad to have somebody use those things, that she knows she never would herself and she thinks it is high time that somebody got some good out of them. Did you ever?"

"And that boy Harry went over yistiddy to Mrs. Thrum's and offered to tend her baby, Moses, for her, and she was just foolish enough to let him do it. Pretty soon both boy and baby were gone, nobody knew where, and the neighbors hunted high and low for them. Finally, they found Harry down to the shore in swimming. Mrs. Thrum was about distracted as the baby was nowhere to be seen and she supposed he had drowned it; but he told them Moses was all right, as he had left him in the bulrushes! Well, sure enough, the baby was all right. That fellow had put him over the fence into our currant bushes in the garden and left him, and there we found him smiling and happy. He's just a dear, if his name is Moses Peter Thrum. And that oldest boy, Tom, is sky larking with all the young girls in the village and they all think he is beautiful and don't take any interest in their work and don't sleep nights and talk over the fence together by the hour about him. They are a powerful uncommon family."



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Thomas listened to this outburst with the calm, sphinx-like exterior which had attended him from the cradle.

"Do they like the place?" he inquired quietly.

"Oh, yes. It is so trooly rooral, the boys say, whatever that is."

"Is the head of the family here?" he continued.

"Yes," said Prudence, "going to stay about a week longer and coming again 'fore the family goes back."

"Guess, then, I'll stop over night and scrape acquaintance with him in the mornin'," said Thomas.

After breakfast the next morning Thomas made ready his team and started slowly up the street. In front of the Jamison cottage he halted and accosted Mr. Jamison, who was enjoying the morning air.

"Mornin'," said Thomas.

"How do you do, sir," was the response.

"See you are enjoyin' the country," said Thomas.

"Yes, we like the place very much," said Mr. Jamison, "now that we have become better acquainted with the people."

"Glad to hear it," said Thomas. "Are you well supplied with garden sass, lettuce, peas, beans and such like? I come this way every Sunday and might let you have some, if you was pinched."



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"I'm glad to know it," said Mr. Jamison. "My wife has been complaining about that. I will ask her."

Thomas got an order and the following Sunday when he delivered it, contrived to have a long talk with Mr. Jamison.

"Hain't thinkin' of buying a place here to come to summers, are ye?" said he, in a seemingly casual way, as he was about to go.

"I thought there was none for sale," said Mr. Jamison.

"Wall, there hain't," said Thomas, "but you might p'raps get one if you went to work right. Deacon Adams down below here is looking out for the widder Jackson's property. It's her daughter I'm courtin'. Now they don't want to sell, but if you should make the deacon a proposition and give them a few months to git used to the idea of the thing, p'raps by that time they will be willing to sell. At any rate, you might try that tack, if you want a place. It takes more time to uproot an oak that's been livin' on the same soil for years than it does one of them strawberry plants that's changed about every year or two."

"I'll think about it," said Mr. Jamison as they parted.

About a month later when Thomas came to see Prudence he learned Mr. Jamison had surprised



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everybody by writing from New York and offering to buy the house.

"What do you think about it?" said Thomas.

"I think just as mother does, that it's ridiculous," was the reply.

"Stranger things have happened," said Thomas.

"But where could we go to?" suggested Prudence.

"You could hire Mr. Jones' place, or better, p'raps the deacon would sell you half of his house. It's big enough for two families."

"You talk strange," said Prudence laughing. "You don't really think we ought to sell, do you?"

"I'll think it over and let you know next week," he replied. "What does the deacon say about your selling?"

"He thinks it would be foolish, of course," was her answer.

Thomas wisely unfolded his scheme gradually. His courtship had extended over a long period, because under the circumstances he knew he would be rejected, if he should propose marriage. Prudence, he felt, would not be persuaded to leave her mother alone without care and her mother would not, of course, consent to leave the village where she was born and reared and where her best days had been spent. Some unusual change must take place. When, therefore, he learned that the Jamisons were pleased with the locality, he began



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to think and to plan. He succeeded, as we have seen, in inducing Mr. Jamison to make an offer for the Jackson place. He must next obtain the consent of Dea. Adams to the sale. He knew very well that it would be of no avail to argue with the deacon personally, but he was sure that his suggestion concerning the possibility of the widow buying one-half of the deacon's house would reach the ears of the latter in due time and that it would have a powerful influence upon a man so shrewd in worldly matters as the deacon was known to be. If the deacon could be won over, then would be the time for Thomas to propose marriage. He could assure Prudence that her mother would not really be left alone, if she should marry, but would be in a measure under the care of the deacon's family, or would, at least, have some one to call upon in case of illness.

At the edge of the bluff across the street from Mrs. Jackson's house were three or four rough board benches for the accommodation of the village loungers in summer, each elaborately carved with the initials of the amateur wood-carvers of the town. One Saturday toward the latter part of the summer several children, including the three youngest Jamison children, were busily playing around these benches, when Harry Jamison, the leader of the band, suddenly dropped over the edge of the



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bluff and landed several feet below in the soft sand, which sloped abruptly to the seashore.

“Hello there,” he shouted, “let’s make a big cave in this bank. You go home, Brother, and get the shovels and we’ll have fun.”

In a few minutes the boys were busily at work. They continued shoveling with unabated ardor for about an hour, then crawled into their cave, rested, talked and planned. Harry entertained them with a description of the Mammoth Cave, of which he had heard; then they agreed to meet again the following week, make the hole deeper and wider and furnish the place with chairs and a table. Harry promised to bring his big brother, Tom, over to preach to them; they would have a school and some thought they ought to live there all the time when it was finished. They had fine sport and the future was big with possibilities.

But it seems that things had been otherwise ordered. The next day was Sunday and Thomas came again to see Prudence. As the evening shadows deepened, they left their favorite corner on the verandah and strolled down the path and across the street to the edge of the bluff. Prudence rested herself on one of the benches and Thomas soon found it convenient to take a seat beside her. They watched the lights upon the passing vessels, listened to the roar of the breakers upon the bar



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and discussed the gossip of the preceding week.

"Has the deacon said anything more about the sale of the property?" at length inquired Thomas.

"He seems to be on the fence now," said Prudence. "Doesn't know whether to advise mother to sell or not. Is praying for light."

"The deacon is a good man," said Thomas, "and I hope his prayers will be answered." Then suddenly turning to her, he exclaimed with evident emotion,

"I believe they will be, Prudence, and that our dreams will be at last realized."

"What do you mean?" she replied.

"Would you not be mine, if there were some way by which your mother could have care and attention, if needed, or at least could have some one in the same house with her?" said Thomas.

"Yes," replied Prudence, and as he grasped her hand, they both relapsed into silent and sweet meditation.

At length a shuffling noise was heard behind them and Thomas recognized the deacon returning from the prayer meeting, as he approached one of the benches. He was muttering to himself and appeared greatly agitated. Prudence heard nothing, but Thomas could catch a few words occasionally. "Widow—hang it—said tew much at first—hang it—s'pose I've got to take back water—hang it—aouw!"



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He had seated himself on one of the benches and both bench and deacon were now disappearing down the embankment. Thomas could hear him scramble but the sounds grew fainter and more distant.

"I guess he's gone to the bottom," said Thomas, jumping up and taking the regular path to the shore.

The old man was considerably bruised, shaken up and out of breath, but he still had strength enough to exclaim vigorously, as Thomas approached: "Drat those infernal boys. They are always up to some diviltry. I believe they undermined that seat on purpose. Where in the world did you come from?"

Thomas explained that he had dimly seen the accident from a distance.

"I didn't know anybody was around," said the deacon. "Hang it—I'll arrest those fellows. I've rolled down this bank from top to bottom. Seems as if every sinner in my body was crunshed."

"You'll feel better soon," said Thomas. "The sand was soft and the rocks few."

"Drat it," said the deacon, "how's the widder? I was goin' to see her to-night."

"I will take your message," said Thomas.

"No you won't neither," was his reply. "I'll see her myself."

As soon as the deacon's "sinners" would permit,



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he drove down to the widow Jackson's and capitulated. The hand of the Lord, he thought, was in this transaction somewhere, although he could not just see where, and if the widow should sell her house and buy half of his (the price would be very reasonable) he believed an overruling Providence would see to it that her future should be as full of mercies as her past had been and perhaps even fuller.

So it came about that Mr. Jamison bought the house and the engagement of Thomas and Prudence soon followed. Unfortunately for the deacon, however, the widow Jackson died suddenly before any bargain had been made with him and for a long time he appeared very unhappy. Her death was a great blow to him, he said.

The wedding of Thomas and Prudence occurred the following spring. There were a number of presents from the Jamisons and the following note from Harry.

"Dear friends: Mother says you two are going to be married and I must send corn-grat-your-relations. I scratch my head and can't think nothing to say. I can do more than I can say. Give my love to the deacon. I had a bully time last summer.

HARRY."







AMOS STRONG, LEGISLATOR







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## AMOS STRONG, LEGISLATOR

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### II

**H**AW, Joseph, I hardly knew ye. Let me git my specs. Why, you're lookin' fust rate. I s'posed you'd be all kinked up with dyspepsy, same as our ministers are." And Aunt Priscilla gave one of her characteristic chuckles. "Law, you must have had to study hard."

Joseph assured her that he was feeling very well in spite of close application to study.

"Wall, p'raps 'tis more what they eat than what they study," continued Aunt Priscilla chuckling again. "I allus thought our ministers' wives was poor cooks, but I didn't das to say nothin' to them. And your mother, how is she?"

"No better, I fear," replied Joseph.

"Oh! I'm so sorry. Tell her I think of her often. It's so tedious and hard to lay so long in the same room in the same bed. The Lord be with her. I know what it is, law sakes, I guess I do. There, give her that package. I've had it right here ready to send for much as tew weeks."

Joseph thanked her and inquired for her son Amos.

"Nobody knows where *he* is," replied the old lady, "sence he's got polertics on the brain. 'Spouse you've heerd about his wantin' to go to the legisla-



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tur. That air Senator Jimson is at the bottom of it, I think, but Amos says he's anxious to git 'lected, 'cause he thinks he can git that clam law passed he talks so much about. He says there'll be a bigger call for clam hoes if that law is passed. I suspicion, however, he has got some bigger pussonal object than that in mind, p'raps tew or three of them. He's a good boy, howsomever, and I hope he gits 'lected, though, land sakes, he's no more fit to be representative than a hin is to swim. He's a good boy, though."

"Does he find any encouragement in the town for his ambition?" inquired Joseph. "Oh law! yes," said Aunt Priscilla, "lots of these young upstarts is eggin' him on."

The subject was not a pleasant one for Joseph and he pursued his inquiry no further. "My mother has expressed a desire to see you," said he, "at some early day when it is convenient for you to come. I will drive down and take you up to the house any afternoon you may select."

"Law, how good you be, Joseph, but I don't know's I can come 'fore Thursday," said the old lady.

"Very well," said Joseph, "then I will call for you about two o'clock on Thursday, if that will be satisfactory."

"Oh! yes," said Aunt Priscilla, "I shall be so glad to come."



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## AMOS STRONG, LEGISLATOR

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"And mother will be very much pleased to see you," said Joseph, as he took his leave.

Joseph Andrews was a young man of excellent attainment, good family and good manners, who had been and was still, in a measure, the pride of the village of Columbus. He had been the leading scholar at the high school. In the academy and at college he was always near the head of his class—sometimes, in fact, at the very head. Prizes had come to him and now at the age of twenty-two, having completed a course at the law school, he was seriously considering the first great problem of manhood, the problem where his first and all-important entry into the world of business, society and politics should be made. He had large political ambitions, but was reluctant to assert his claims. He had been trained for a profession which, he thought, peculiarly fitted him for legislative duties and he felt that the village ought to see this and call him to the position which Amos Strong was seeking with an ardor equalled only by his unfitness therefor. The people appeared to admire Joseph's learning and ability. Would they send a blacksmith to represent them rather than a college graduate? Would they prefer to travel in an ox-cart when they could take an express train at the same price? It seemed to Joseph incredible and he waited for some expression, indicating that the



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people were thinking of him and desirous for him to come forward.

One other circumstance confirmed him in the idea that the people in the end would call him to the position. His father was a man of substance, for many years a leading citizen of the town. In due course of time, Joseph would probably inherit one-half of the property and, with his education, would easily be the leading citizen of the town, if he should settle there. Would the people fail to use every reasonable effort to retain such a citizen in the town? Would they fail to see how useful he might be to the town in the future? He could not believe that these friends, who were so kind and complimentary, were merely phrase-makers, or totally blind to their own interest.

The summer passed, Joseph remained expectant, alert, anxious to find some sign of a movement in his favor, but deeming that the office should come to him as a matter of right, and not as a result of self-seeking and dickering. Amos Strong, on the other hand, had no such scruples. He neglected no opportunity to push his claims. There were frequent conferences of his friends at the blacksmith shop, his campaign headquarters. A large legend, "*Our clams must and shall be protected*," greeted every one entering the shop, speeches of Senator Jimson and his essay on clams were freely dis-



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## AMOS STRONG, LEGISLATOR

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tributed to all customers, while an anonymous and of course, anomalous pamphlet on the critical condition of the fishing industry was sure to fill the pocket of every one who came within hailing distance of Amos. As the campaign progressed, the shop was closed more and more frequently and customers began to grow impatient at the delays in securing their work done. "Don't you know you can't talk," "Let polertics alone," "Bring your shop around and shoe my horse," "My wheels must be *tired* waiting, so send them home," were some of the notices he found scrawled on his shop door, when from time to time he returned to work. Amos held his opponents responsible for these warnings and abated none of his political activity.

To say that the progress of the campaign was decidedly disappointing to Joseph is to describe his feelings very inadequately. He was unable to account for the infatuation of the people. No one seemed to consider him as a possible factor in the situation and finally late in the summer he ventured to suggest to a few of his relatives his availability as a candidate. They were not inclined to encourage him.

"Amos' opponents are mostly Baptists you know, and you can't expect any help from them in this town, being a Congregationalist," said Uncle Joe.

"You know Amos is solid with the Mutual Bombast Club," chimed in Uncle Peter.



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## AMOS STRONG, LEGISLATOR

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"He's an honerary member of our Sewing Circle," said Aunt Betty.

"He's working hard for it and you can't do the things he does, I know," said Aunt Susie.

Joseph thought Aunt Susie was about right, but he did not like to believe that injustice would really triumph. He knew that his relatives were always inclined to "throw cold water" on his plans and so accordingly he consulted other friends in the town. The result, however, was not reassuring. The contest was "on" between the two factions. Each side was eager to win, and no one seemed to think they could "swop horses" in this part of the political stream.

"You see the fight has been advertised tew take place," said Ike, the champion loafer of the village, "and it would be dretful to have a cop, right from college, break it up. Down with the cop!"

On the night before the caucus there was a gathering of the "Somehow" or Strong faction at the blacksmith shop. Senator Jimson was there to consult with his lieutenants; there was a modest lunch served on horse shoes, plenty of hot coffee prepared on the spot, while Amos pulled the bellows to heat it, and nuts cracked at the anvil. The situation was canvassed, the political fences found to be in good repair and confidence seemed to be in the air. Late in the evening some of the girls of the Kit Kat Club called to wish Amos success and



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were treated to hot coffee. One of them, who seemed unusually interested in the campaign, was heard to remark that she was thankful women could not vote, as she was sure she would stuff the ballot box for Amos, if she had the chance.

The following evening, as soon as the vote was announced at the caucus, Amos, the nominee, arose from his seat, hat in hand, walked straight to the door and disappeared. No one seemed to know where he was going. Those friends who went to his shop and to his home after the meeting, failed to find him at either place.

They were decidedly nonplussed. As a matter of fact, Amos had brushed aside politics for the moment and at the house of Miss Letitia Warner was plotting to secure one more object of his ambition. Since the death of her mother several years before, Miss Letitia had been at the head of the Warner household and in that position had been reasonably successful, at least, in the opinion of Amos. He had been a frequent, in fact, a regular caller there. He had learned that she could cook nearly as well as his mother, that she cleaned her lamps every day, that there were no cobwebs on the walls and no lint on the cups and saucers: in short he considered her to be a careful housekeeper and had rejoiced that he could bestow his affections on one so worthy in herself. He had not ventured,



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however, to declare his earnest purpose, because his future seemed too uncertain. Now, however, all was changed. The nomination, which he had received, was in that town equivalent to an election. He was sure of a largely increased income during the following year and the bulwarks which had heretofore been thrown up against the advance of Cupid seemed to be falling in ruin.

"You know I've been hangin' around here a good deal, Letty," began Amos, "and the more I hang around the more I want to."

Letty began to blush. "You horrid thing," she protested.

"Wall, may be," he continued, "but I've heerd some good news to-night, Letty, and I'm anxious to hear some more before mornin'."

"Amos, have you got that nomination?" cried Letitia, jumping from her seat. "I thought you hadn't; you didn't say so right off."

"I guess I have," said Amos.

"Isn't that good," said Letitia in delight.

"Yes," said Amos, 'tis good for two reasons; fust, I didn't like to git beat by that Baptist loominary that was runnin' agin me and second, it sort of clears the air for Coopid to shoot."

"You're just dreadful to night. I don't believe you got the nomination at all. I don't believe you are smart enough," retorted Letitia.



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"Wall, Letty, you see 'twas just this way," began Amos. "I see 'twas pretty clost and just before the polls closed, Sam Thomas come over to me and began to talk hoss rakes and mowing machines. You know he runs a farm several miles back and has six sons, all voters. I showed him that I knew some men in Discord, where the Legislatur meets, who deal in farm implements and told him I would gurrantee I could git those things at a reduction, when he come up to the city. That settled him and he give his boys the wink and they all voted for me. And now, Letty, there's no gal in this town that I like equal to you and I want you to be my wife, after I git through my term of office. I'd like to git married right away but I can't git too many irons in the fire to once. Now, Letty, won't you be mine?"

"Oh, I'm so surprised," said Letty looking down.

"No you hain't nuther," said Amos, as he took a seat beside her. "You know I've been head over heels in love with you this long time."

Amos got his second piece of good news that evening, he was elected in November and Senator Jimson was returned for another year.

After it was all over, Amos began to feel more keenly than ever his disqualification for the office he had sought.

"I s'pose," said he one night at the shop, as he was talking the matter over with some of his



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friends, "I s'pose I ought to have withdrewed, and let Joe Andrews in. He would have liked to go."

"Wall, he'll git along all right with all his larnin,'" said one.

"He don't need the money as much as you. His father's well fixed," said another.

"P'raps we'll give him a chance when he gits older," suggested a third.

"But I say," said Uncle Abel, who rarely said anything, "I feel as if Amos is right. I think we should git the best man for the place. We all know how poorly Amos is fixed and what a good fellar he is, but I don't think we ought to give him such a place just out of friendship and charity and fellar-feelin' and all that. I b'lieve in the survival of the fittest. 'Tany rate, though I b'lieve in friendship and charity, yit when it leads to the survival of the onfittest, as in this case, I think it had better stop. There's such a thing as bein' so friendly and charitable as to beggar yourself and this can be applied to the people of a town, as well as to one person."

They all laughed.

"I guess you're right, Uncle Abel," said Amos, "I guess that's what it is in my case, the survival of the onfittest."

"That's what we're comin' to more and more every day," said Uncle Abel, as he disappeared in the evening darkness.



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In due course of time the bill "to protect clams and other shellfish in the town of Columbus" was duly introduced into the Legislature by Amos Strong. It was drawn by Senator Jimson who was really manager of the affair, with Amos in the role of humble servant. The bill embraced two provisions, first, to prevent non-residents from taking clams and other shellfish within the limits of the town, second, to prevent residents from taking clams during six months of the warmer part of the year. Of course, it was bitterly opposed by the representatives of the adjoining towns whose people for a long time had fattened on the clams of Columbus. Under Jimson's direction, however, Amos succeeded in dickering with many of the other members from the country who had bills of their own to get through and needed his vote.

The members from the city were more formal and harder for Amos to approach, but their support was necessary for the success of the bill. Senator Jimson said he would attend to them, but Amos thought he ought to do something, too, in that direction. He was anxious to deliver a speech on the bill in the House, believing that the city members would think him "some pumpkins after all," as he expressed it, if they found he could make a speech, and would regard his cause more favorably. Senator Jimson was at first utterly opposed to this



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plan. In private he ridiculed it. The Senator, it should be said, was a college graduate. Nurtured in luxury and having no special fondness for books, he had submitted, by reason of parental orders, to the operation of having a college education forced down his throat. This meant that he had imbibed considerable book knowledge and acquired more than ordinary facility in literary expression, in spite of all he could do. Nothing less would have satisfied his father. At the time he was in college, parents had not reached the dizzy height of advising their children to go to college to study human nature and life! I can imagine what the old man Jimson would have said to such an idea. He would have said, "Why, if my son needs to study human nature and life, he can come right down to my store and I'll gurrantee he'll get more knowledge of human nature and life in six months in my employ, than he can git in college in ten years, and besides he'll know what a dollar is worth when he gits through. If we are going to have educated men, let's have them know something that we common folks don't know, or else abolish colleges."

After graduation Jimson undertook a political career and succeeded very well with the aid of his father's influence and some shrewdness of his own. After his father's death, he very adroitly invested



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some of his property in industries employing large numbers of men and his political strength in the district became fixed on a firm foundation. His influence was sufficient to secure some of the city members for the bill, but its fate was still in doubt. Under these circumstances, on further consideration, he consented that Amos might deliver a speech, provided he could see the effort before its delivery.

"See the speech," cried Amos, "see the speech! Why, I can't write a speech, I want you to write it for me. I'll give you the idees, but you must dress 'em up. I s'posed you knew I wanted you to write it."

"Well," said Jimson, "what ideas can you give me?"

"Fust," said Amos, "You want to begin 'way back to the creation or near there and make some allusions showin' how old shellfish and especially clams are. That will show the edjecated members that I'm solid on history. Then you can come down gradually to the time when the Injuns dug clams along the shores of Columbus and how their shell heaps are dug out every year in our back yards. Right at this point you might git up some joke about how the Injuns seem to have shelled the town several centuries before the British undertook that job in the Revolution. That would put the audjence in good humor and then you could sail



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right in and reel off the solid argyments for the bill. You know what they are as well as I do, so I need not tell you, but be sure when you end up, you sing the praises of shellfish as compared with other fishes. There is a great chance for oratory there."

The speech was at length completed after several conferences with Amos. He tried at first to commit the whole to memory, but it was new work for him and set him into a cold perspiration whenever he attempted it. He, therefore, abandoned this plan after a few efforts and decided to read the speech from manuscript. Those who were present say that he began somewhat haltingly and feebly, but gradually warmed up as he got into his subject and even on the spur of the moment interpolated some of his own ideas. As he completed the peroration with the words: "I know not what others may prefer, but as for me give me the succulent bivalve, nestling in its modest shell, pure and sweet and rich in its distilled nectar, and let the bold and slimy swimmers of the sea, that lure many a brave fisherman to a watery grave, go their dreary and devious ways, unnoticed and untouched," it was said by some that the wooden codfish upon the ceiling could be seen wagging its tail and snapping its eyes in approbation of the sentiments expressed, but there is some doubt whether this is strictly



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accurate. At all events, the speech was regarded as extraordinary by the country members and the vote taken soon after in the House resulted in the passage of the bill. Senator Jimson looked after its interests in the Senate and in due course it became law.

When Amos returned to his constituents, he received frequent requests for copies of that speech, but always declined to gratify his people in this respect.

"They won't catch me palming off anything as mine on the good people down here, when it isn't, no sir," said Amos, "not on anybody but those city fellers up in the Legislatur."

Not long after his return to the shop there was a wedding in Columbus between Amos and Letitia, there were floral horse shoes, floral clam hoes and floral clams and plenty of fun, jollity and sociability. Nearly everyone in town attended and tarried till long after midnight. The affair was the talk of the town for a month after. Amos has now settled in a small house of his own and abandoned all further political ambition, although he still remains the local "boss." The town still continues in the same old ruts as formerly. "Joe" Andrews is settled in a distant city, his faith in human nature shaken at the outset of his career. Very few of the people seem to realize the true significance of their



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action. Whatever is, is all right with nine-tenths of humanity. There are, however, some who can look beneath the surface, and see the great uplifting and re-acting influences and results that would have come both to the town and to young Andrews, had the people been more heedful of this highly-trained mind and cultured gentleman and taken into their hands the key which would have unlocked the treasures of his soul for them and made him their fellow-citizen and benefactor. A little of the "horse sense" which takes the best that is within reach, would have saved that community from error, would have sweetened its own life and that of this young man, and hurt nobody. There are some mistakes that are tragedies in themselves.











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